Webinar Transcript: Agile Principles for Leaders

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- Matt Bennet (Slalom)
- Sharon Trilk (SIPA)
- Beth Justice (SIPA)

Video Transcript

Ashley Brand
All right. Good morning everyone. Hello, and thank you for joining us for this Webinar Wednesday. My name is Sharon, and I am with SIPA, your Colorado government authority, helping you get information and services online and offering Colorado grant funding. In today's webinar, we're going to hear from Slalom on Agile principles for leaders. Before we get started, please go ahead and turn on captioning if you need or desire and note that during this webinar you are muted. If you have questions, or would like to communicate with the presenters at any point during this webinar, please use the chat or the Q and A function. We'll unmute everyone at the end for any remaining questions. And also, our presenters are going to have some questions for you during the during the presentation. So we'd love to see any feedback that you have. We'll have a poll question for you to answer, and we'll have a post webinar survey. So we look forward to your feedback. Please join me in welcoming our speakers, Matt Bennett and Ashley Brand with Slalom. Matt and Ashley, thank you for your time, and what's sure to be a fabulous and informative presentation. Also on the call is SIPA sales and marketing director, Beth Justice, if you any questions for us. Thank you again for joining us, and with that, I will turn it over to our guests.

Matt Bennett
Thanks, Sharon, and thank you all great to be here, and very excited to share with you today our presentation on Agile principles for leaders. I'm Matt Bennett. I'll do a quick overview of what we're going to jump into for today and introduce our main speaker, Ashley. And to start, we'll just talk through our agenda, so we'll do a bit of a welcome and introduction. The start of the content is really going to

dive into the origins of agility, talking about a agile mindset, and then finish with agile leader principles. And so as Sharon mentioned, we have a poll that we would like you to take during the time, and we will be asking you some questions that we'd love for you to participate through the chat. So please feel free to use that chat to ask us any questions. We'll be monitoring it, and we're very excited to chat with you today. I'm Matt Bennett, director of our public and social impact team here in our Rocky Mountain market, or mountain west market. I'm located in the Denver Metro area, and have the real pleasure of working with SIPA across the state of Colorado and the work that we do for Slalom here.

Matt Bennett
I'm joined by Ashley Brand, who is one of our senior consultants and a agile subject matter expert, who is continuing to deliver great work out at clients in the agile delivery space. And I will let her introduce herself a little bit more, but very excited to share more about the work that we've done and some of those concepts that we bring to this, conversation around agile principles for leaders. As a brief overview of who Slalom is, so really our vision and what we stand for as a company is that we want folks to have the opportunity to love their life and their work. And really that's the purpose that we set out, the vision that we set out to achieve every day and as we work with our clients, as we work with our people, our why, and the purpose that we do that for is to help our people, help organizations dream bigger, move faster and build better tomorrows for all. So we are a full service consulting company. We have broad, deep and and really customizable possibilities and how we work with folks. And we bring a focus on why. We are able to bring our services across the entire spectrum of the different capabilities you see there on the right. And we take a approach where we want to make sure we're discovering the right path to give you the outcome you look for design in a way that meets those needs and build the most impactful solutions for you. And one thing that that is consistent in many ways across all of these capability areas you see on the left is a mindset and a focus on being agile and adaptive and really bringing more of that innovative view to our clients. So, very excited to share this with you all today, and I will pass it over to Ashley to do a quick intro and then jump into the origins of agility.

Ashley Brand
Thanks so much, Matt. So glad to have you all on the call. Again, as Matt mentioned, my name is Ashley brand. I'm a senior consultant here at Slalom. I specialize in enterprise agile coaching and agility. I also have a background in Lean process improvement. I've been able to bring these types of ways of thinking, ways of working, to a variety of spaces. I've worked at City and County of Denver. That was long time standing role as a consultant there, leading consultant. And then I've brought this to a variety of industries. So aerospace, telecom, healthcare, and now I have the opportunity to be working with the state, with a group called the BITS team, business, innovation, technology and security for, if any of you are familiar with them. So I love bringing these concepts to folks like you that work in public sector, and I will step us through some of the intro to agile as we go through, but I want to hear from you if we go to the next slide. I'd love to hear what your experience with Agile is just so I can tailor some of the content and interact with you further for the for the webinar. So thanks for bringing up that poll, Sharon.

Ashley Brand
A couple answers here for you. So, agile never heard of it. Totally fine answer. I have no idea what it is.

Please teach me. You have some beginner knowledge of agile practices. You think you know a decent amount, but you could always learn more, or maybe you're an agile expert like myself, and you guide others through agile ways of working. So if you could take a minute and respond to the poll question here, we'll get some results and kind of see you know where our experience lies.

Ashley Brand
All right. Okay, lots of beginners on the call. This is perfect. The content is perfect for you all. We're going to talk about the origins, as Matt said, we'll talk about agile mindset, and then we'll talk about agile leadership. It looks like there's a few experts on the call too. So please feel free to weigh in and ask questions. I want this to be collaborative as we move forward. Thanks so much. All right, next slide. Let's get into it.

Ashley Brand
So starting from the beginning, the emergence of Agile. So as many of you can think about a time when there was a rise of uncertainty and a rise of technology. You might think about the 90s. If you were there for the big tech boom, and there was a lot going on with the rise of software, you could probably remember that there were constantly new things happening. I would say we're actually in another state of uncertainty and rise of technology right now, with the rise of AI, rise of customers saying, hey, this is what I want from this new technology, right? Giving frequent feedback about -- this is not a software that would be helpful to me in my job, this is something that I want different and a rapid rise of innovation, lots of companies competing with each other, trying to beat every other company to market with this new technology. And that is really where agile comes from. The 90s, early to mid 90s, with the tech boom, because delivery teams and software teams needed a way to deliver things quickly in an adaptive way, not a predictive way. So if you think about traditional project planning and needing to predict things far ahead, right? It was not working with the rapid innovation and the rapid feedback that they were getting from customers in the 90s.

Ashley Brand
There was also a lot of focus on value to the customer with that feedback. And so they, the software engineers at the time, really said, hey, you know, what we're doing isn't working for where we are right now. We need to be more adaptive, and we need to really put focus on people and not process to be competitive in this in this market. If you go to the next slide, Matt, we'll talk a little bit more about what they were working with at the time. So if you are familiar with project delivery, you've probably heard the word waterfall. Waterfall is that traditional project delivery methodology. It's all about fixed requirements, right and predicting what needs to be delivered. Think about traditional construction, right? Building, a building you have -- you sit down with the customer, you have an architect, you know what the building should look like. You have those fixed requirements, and then from there, you estimate cost and schedule. It is long timelines. It really relies on us being able to be as predictive as possible, to have that magnifying glass and that crystal ball to see things three, five years out. It also makes sure that we have a tight change control process, so that we stick to scope, right? Delivering on time and within budget, is something that you may have heard about in waterfall delivery. And this has its place, but it was very hard to deliver software in this environment because it allowed us to fix requirements, but it wouldn't allow us to change requirements. So if we hear back from customers that this isn't working, we put something out to get feedback from them, a traditional waterfall schedule or

project management methodology may say we don't-- we're not going to change those things. We're not going to adapt. That's what people need. It also focuses a lot of times-- waterfall projects can focus on temporary resources. And software development teams wanted to be long standing. They wanted to grow teams that would work together for a long time on a product. They wanted to make sure that they could estimate things but flex within their delivery. And so as we go to the next slide, Matt, they experiences those challenges and started working towards an agile methodology to fix these things.

Ashley Brand

So if any of you have worked in this way, you might realize that waterfall looks like a waterfall, right? You gather these requirements, you design something, you develop something, and you test and then you deploy, right? You're in maintenance and monitoring after that. Question for you all on the call, I'd love to put hear you from you in the chat, or, you know, we can also have you come off mute eventually. What could go wrong here? So I have a few things, cost and scope, right? Are difficult to estimate all of the things I just said. But what is an issue with this waterfall way of working? What do you think could go wrong, especially if the product's really expensive?

Ashley Brand

I'm looking for my project managers out there. Inadequate communication of business requirements -- we have no idea what we want as customers, right? Sometimes it's like, I think I want this thing. Someone builds it. You look at it and you say, actually, I don't like that. Change something. I've done that before. Right? As a user, it's really hard to know all the requirements at the beginning. I love that Natalie, scope change, right? Scope changes because you learn things as you're delivering right? So things might get really, really big and out of control because you underestimated something. Unknown, unknowns. We call that the cone of uncertainty. I'm super certain about what will happen, maybe in the next day or two, maybe the next week, not in a few months or years. Love these answers. Customer doesn't accept the product. Yes. And if you build a whole building for three years and you give that to the customer and they don't like it, then what happens? Right? Expectations from stakeholders? Yes, exactly those shift, requirements change, scope creep, market conditions change. Exactly. You could spend a long time building something the market changes, and that product might never make its market, or might be shelved because it doesn't meet the needs of the customer anymore. Funding changes. That's not something we deal with in our environment at all. [Laughs] Funding changes happen. Yes, I love all these answers. Y'all are experts already. One thing that I see in this that wasn't mentioned the chat is delayed testing. So testing so important, right? To figure out if anything is going wrong, to get user feedback, and if you test really far along in the development process, that leads to issues as well. Thanks for the input.

Ashley Brand

Let's go to the next slide. So let's talk agile. Talk agile. Agile is adaptive, right? It flips things around from the waterfall methodology, so you have a fixed cost, and typically that's a budget that funds a delivery team. It's not estimated, right, based on projected schedule or unknown unknowns. I love that answer. Daniel, thank you. I'm going to use that it is fixed cost to fund a team, and you'd typically have a fixed schedule in sprints. So sprints are really short delivery cycles in which we can deliver a working portion of our products and get feedback quickly. We can also test at the end of those cycles too, and that helps us from waiting really far down the project delivery timeline. The thing that's estimated in

agile is features or the things that we are going to deliver. We have initial requirements gathering. We might build something for two to four weeks, then we get feedback on it, and we make sure that's the thing that the customer wants. So responding to a lot of those chats that you put through when we do that, we can embrace change. We can update scope. We can change things as we're developing to keep crystal clear and aligned with our customers needs, the changing market conditions, and anything that we may learn in the development process. So I know I'm describing it as a utopian thing. There's definitely a lot behind this, but that's really the crux of agile, and how it came to be to really respond to kind of the challenges that people were having with waterfall delivery and to make us more adaptive and value focused.

Ashley Brand

Any questions so far? Awesome. Okay, so let's talk. What have you heard about agile? I'm going to disprove some things. I call this the myth busting section. So even if you've heard of agile before, you might have an idea in your head about what it is and what it isn't. Agile, in our opinion -- and you know, as we do agile transformations, we say this over and over again -- it's a mindset. If you don't change your mind about how things can be delivered and how we can deliver products to customers, agile will never work right in your organization. It is a mindset, and I'll tell a story about that here in a few minutes, about changing my own mindset to be more adaptive. It's iterative. So again, you might be delivering every two to four weeks, one to four weeks, and it's incremental, so that you can build slowly and keep getting that feedback. It's adaptive and it's customer centric, and above all else, it's value focused. So that leads to different measurements, talking about what customers value and what they don't, giving survey results, things like that. It is something I think that probably a lot of public servants align to, which is why I love doing agile transformation and agile delivery in public spaces. Because, customer focus, customer centricity and value focus aligns perfect with why we do what we do.

Ashley Brand

You click one more time, Matt, let's talk about what agile is not [Laughs]. So it's not a prescriptive methodology. There's definitely frameworks, right? It's not just totally gray area. There's scrum and kanban and some other frameworks that we can use, but it's not prescriptive. It's really supposed to be adapted to the organization, the customers needs. And so someone like myself as an agile coach can work with teams to figure out how to make agile work for that, which is great. It's not a weapon to make everything transparent, just so that we can come down on teams for not delivering right. Is not is not using that in a good way. If you click through a few more, it's not a silver bullet, right? It's not going to fix all your problems. It's not to be blindly followed. It's definitely not undisciplined. People worry about getting rid of waterfall because they'll be like, it's chaos. And then the other big thing I like to highlight for groups like this is it's not only for tech. So you might have heard it just for software delivery. It can be used anywhere. We've seen it successfully used in HR departments and in benefit services departments. I used it at Denver animal shelter when I worked there. You know, it can be used anywhere, in any industry, not just software tech. It's not a set of rules, and it's not something you do, it's something that you are. Are there any kind of surprises on here for those that have background in agile? I just want to take a pause and see if there's anything that people might have already expected agile to be that it really isn't.

Ashley Brand

Okay, no earth shattering things here, that's great. So let's move on. As I mentioned, it's not just for tech. If you have a background in manufacturing, you may have heard about lean. As I mentioned earlier, kanban and lean are agile cousins, and that got its start in car manufacturing, the Toyota Production System. So if you've worked in manufacturing, if you know about eliminating waste and delivery and efficiently, you know something already about agile. They really-- agile frameworks help us with full business agility. And I will say again, companies are really looking to apply this in all of their areas. It's one of our most popular offerings, and it is something I think that I've seen really bring value to a wide variety of groups.

Ashley Brand

So let's talk about the next section, the agile mindset. And so when we talk agile, we're going to kind of talk about agile as a mindset in relation to some of the values and principles that we have as agilists. And this is where I definitely want to hear from you about your areas of your organization, and how you may be adapting these things already and not even know it, and where there might be some opportunities. So if you go to the next slide, Matt,

Ashley Brand

I love this visual because it just helps ground us in, you know, agile being, that mindset, that way of thinking, and then taking this through to some of the more meaty topics under agile. So before, you know, we talk about values and principles -- the values and principles were codified in something called the Agile Manifesto, and that was created in 2001 in Snowbert, Utah at a software conference. It was a bunch of software engineers talking exactly about what we're talking about today, that they're having problems delivering quickly and getting customer feedback, and they knew that their way of developing software wasn't working. So just like all great ideas, they're sitting around a bar writing stuff on cocktail napkins, and this is how the Agile Manifesto was was codified. They talked about the values that they really should be bringing to software development. They talked about some principles, which we'll go over, and then eventually, out of this, spun all of these unlimited practices and frameworks, some of which you may have heard of scrum, kanban, extreme programming, lean, crystal -- ways to deliver software quickly and efficiently. And that is what we've been working from and kind of bringing to organizations ever since.

Ashley Brand

So we're going to step through those values and 12 principles next. Go to the next slide. So the four values that this team of software engineers codified in 2001-- and some of these, I think you'll probably resonate with. We are human centered company as Slalom, if you're you know, working in in public sector, doing what you do, you probably value individuals and interactions. So the first one is individual interactions over processes and tools. So while there's value in the items in the bottom, I'm not saying we have to kick out all processes and never use tools and have the wild west out there, we place more value in the items on the top. So that means that I'm going to spend more time with customers and care more about customer requirements and relationship building than I am going to try and fine tune all of our back end processes, or put so many processes into place, right? I care more about the end-user using one of our software tools than I do about the actual tool itself. And so that is the top value of agile -- individuals and interactions.

Ashley Brand

The next one is working products. It doesn't mean anything to anyone if you deliver something that doesn't work for the customer. So if I spend, you know, a year building something, and I hand it to my customer, and they say, "this doesn't work for me, this is this is trash" [Laughs]. "You didn't take my requirements, you didn't get any feedback" -- it doesn't matter how rigorously I documented my process or how many times I communicated status, or, you know, put all of my notes in OneNote for, you know, my team to read. The customer didn't receive a product that works for them. And so working products is the next value of agile customer collaboration over contract negotiation. Yes, we have contracts. Yes, those are things that are built into a lot of our ways of working, but more importantly, it's important that we work with our customers and collaborate with them on what they need. Right? Again, people first.

Ashley Brand

And then the last one, which is where my personal story comes in, about manifesting some of these values, is responding to change over following a plan. So if you're like me, I like to travel, and I like to take trips to new countries. And for someone who wasn't able to travel a lot until recent years, I want to do everything when I go to a new country. And I make a plan, I have a spreadsheet. I know exactly where I want to go at every given hour. If I'm going to Spain, we've got a rigorous schedule with museums and restaurants and not a lot of buffer built in. I realized when I started doing this that that can go very wrong [Laughs] for a few reasons, and I'll let you guess why. Has anyone overly followed a plan on vacation and had things go wrong? And if so, what? Sharon's nodding her head, I love that I can still see you on camera.

Sharon Trilk

I was a bridesmaid for a friend who literally had us down to the minute on a nine page document of how she wanted her day to go. And she did the same thing for vacations too, because, yeah.

Ashley Brand

We're the worst. No one likes that. [Laughs]

Sharon Trilk

She spent all the time looking for things, and she really dived into all there was to do there and everything that was great. I mean, that's that's more than I do. I show up and I'm like, Okay, what's fun?

Ashley Brand

Yes, yes, exactly. Uh, got on the wrong train. But, I have totally done that, or the trains have been on strike. That's happened to me multiple times in Europe. I have all these plans, and I can't get to where I need to go. No trains. Weather? Plans go to pot, right? We're going to the beach today. It's rainy and terrible. Am I going to make someone sit on the beach with me, because that's the plan? No, I'm going to respond to change and figure it out. One thing goes off schedule. People get sick, right? And so again, you know, this is kind of one of those sticky examples that you can probably think of. We can have the best laid plans on our vacation for our product delivery at work and our personal lives, but if we're not an agile and adaptable and respond to change, we can have a really bad time of it. And again, it's really hard, as Sharon mentioned, you know, if you're with other people, if you're constantly

trying to stick to a plan, no matter what the input is, if you're learning things, if people are giving you feedback, if people are sick, if you're just pushing forward following that plan at the at the down downside of everyone who's with you. that's not the best approach to life or or delivery.

Ashley Brand

[Reads from chat] Ferry cancels ruined my Gantt Chart. Mark, I love that. That's a very project management joke. Everything went red on the Gantt chart after the ferry got canceled. It's also just very hard mentally right to to work like this, to be a leadership in this type of environment, if you are not adaptable. And we know that again, with the rise of AI, with the constant change, right? It changes in administration, changes in rules and regulations, we have to be adaptable, or else we'll perish, right? So that is another thing I love about teaching agile concepts, and why I always underscore that it's a mindset. Thanks for the feedback.

Ashley Brand

Let's talk practices. So four values. My favorite, responding to change. There's 12 principles. So this is where I'm going to spend kind of the bulk of the time in this section is to just talk through these principles, and this is where we make it real for you and your organization. So first one, customer satisfaction, right? If we're making something our customers don't want, what are we doing? Customers could be internal too to your organization. Some people say external customers are the only customers you might be providing something to the teams that are in your same org, right? So you get to decide who your customers are. Those customers, we want to keep them satisfied by early and continuous delivery of valuable products. Don't make them wait for two years to have something that they can use. If you can push out a viable product that they can use, right? If you're building a dashboard for someone and you can give them just a quick glance dashboard for them to take to their next status meeting, and then they give you feedback and you can iterate. That's great, right? Without them having to wait.

Ashley Brand

Requirements change. We welcome those changing requirements. This really hurts some people, because, again, strict change control, expenses, all of that. But in agile, we do welcome changing requirements to a point so that again, they can meet those customer needs, delivering working products frequently, so in weeks rather than months. And the keyword there is working. So what does it mean for something that you're doing to work for someone? And it could be any product. Again, a dashboard, you're creating a report, you're creating a strategic roadmap, right? As a leader, what is the working thing that you're delivering, and how are people interacting with it? And is it of value?

Ashley Brand

Business and IT collaboration. This is huge. This is big. Every organization I've worked with is not having siloed business, and IT departments, IT developers and systems analysts, architects are enablers to what the business is doing. And we see time and time again that it is not always a collaborative environment, and so that is something that made it into the agile principles and values, so that the people who are developing or supporting the IT or the technology are laser focused on that customer and value delivery and understanding what the objectives and no-cares are the organization.

Ashley Brand

Trust and empower. This one's my favorite one as a leader. This is all about building projects around motivated individuals. So this might be a passion area of yours, if you are a leader. It's about giving the people doing the work and environment that they feel supported, trusted, and getting them the tools that they need to be as self organized as possible. That eliminates decision bottlenecks. It eliminates the disempowerment that teams feel from overly directive leadership, and it really increases innovation when we have teams who are trusted and empowered. It's something that I value very, very highly for some of my work at Slalom. We trust and empower consultants to do the work out in the field.

Ashley Brand

Face to face is best. This is ever changing with our hybrid work structure, or even remote work structure, but even having cameras on help agile teams.

Ashley Brand

Working features. Again, goes with those working products, just a smaller version of it.

Ashley Brand

Sustainable pace. Are we burning our teams out? Are they able to deliver in a sustainable way? Or are we pushing way too hard on teams and may have attrition?

Ashley Brand

Good design. So whatever we're designing should be excellent.

Ashley Brand

Simplicity, so making sure we're not over engineering things is another agile principle.

Ashley Brand

Self-organizing teams. Let the teams figure out who can do what, who is the best subject matter expert, who's has given talents on the project team so that they can deliver.

Ashley Brand

And my most favorite of all the agile principles, because I have a Lean Six Sigma background, is continuous improvement. So we're never going to be done improving. At regular intervals, the team, the agile team, reflects on how we're doing, what we can do better, right? And then we put some continuous improvement mechanisms in place. So never going to be perfect. Progress over perfection. But we have things like retrospectives and maybe process improvement forums where we figure out how we can improve our delivery. So that's a lot of principles at once, but I want to hear from you as I went through those. What principle do you feel like you all you and your teams are delivering well? So what are you embodying really well at your organization? If you were to choose one of these, you're saying, "oh, we're so great at empowering our teams", or "we're really good at continuous improvement." This is where you get to brag, love to love to see some chats coming through you.

Ashley Brand

[Reads responses from chat] Business and IT collaboration. Trust and empower. Yes, awesome. Trust

and empowerment, another one. Thanks so much. Want to see if there's a there's a pattern here with these SIPA webinars, we're all really good at trusting, empowering teams. Trust and empower for the teams I work with, from Slalom, as Ashley mentioned. Awesome.

Ashley Brand

Self organizing. Thanks, Matt. Yep.

Ashley Brand

Good design. Oh man, I could talk all day about good design, Jeff and bad design.

Ashley Brand

Continuous improvement. Yep.

Ashley Brand

Now, are there any things on here that are areas of opportunity for you? Does anyone want to be brave and share maybe an area of opportunity? Might be something that you might be working on right now with your teams that you would like to improve, or something that you might take away from this webinar where you take back to your teams and say, hey, I want to work a little bit more on embracing changing requirements.

Ashley Brand

[Reads from chat] Deliver working products frequently. Yep, I have to challenge myself on that. Right? Sometimes I could be a perfectionist and I don't want to ship it until it's really, really good. And my my team and my colleagues are really good at pushing me to say, You know what? Just get it out there. If we need to get some feedback, it's ready, we can always iterate.

Ashley Brand

[Reads from chat] Self organizing, sustainability, oh my gosh, yes, that is real. I think the era of trying to do too many things at once and burning out, sustainability is a pretty popular answer.

Ashley Brand

[Reads from chat] Customer satisfaction. Love that. Sustainable sustainability all the way down, face to face, and simplicity.

Ashley Brand

And so there's a lot of different things you can do to kind of bring this back to your organization. So I'll just give you one example before we kind of move on. One of the things that you can do around customer satisfaction is just hear from your customers. So a pretty lightweight thing that you can do is figure out how you're getting that customer feedback and make it measurable. So it could be something like an NPS survey -- Net Promoter Score survey. It could be something a quick Google form, right, that you send out to customers to figure out, Hey, how are we doing? Are we providing the service that you would expect? If not, what could we be doing better? You'd be surprised how many people don't have time to talk to their customers, or don't make time to talk to their customers. So that's like a really good

start for customer satisfaction, is just to hear from them, set a forum or a survey. There's something that you can measure to figure out if you're meeting the mark, right? Don't just assume that you are.

Ashley Brand

Sustainability is -- something that you can do is just do a calendar audit with your teams, right? We do a lot of things where we just add a ton of meetings, and, you know, we think that all of them are, you know, continuing to be valuable, but checking in and looking across the whole meeting cadence, right for you and your teams might be helpful to just fix a little bit of a sustainable pace. No meeting Friday afternoons is something that our area that we work, the state, does, and that helps them to kind of catch up after a long week of meetings. That's another kind of simple thing to put into play.

Ashley Brand

Does anyone have any other kind of quick things that they feel like they could do to work on these areas of opportunity going back to their organization? No wrong answers. Yeah, you don't have to know anything about agile to do so. I bet you'll have some ideas.

Ashley Brand

For me, it's always about communication.

Ashley Brand

Communication? And what does that look like?

Ashley Brand

Um, you know, weekly check ins and quick chats if need be or check you know, jumping on the Zoom call and trying to just figure out this one little pain point that's getting us stuck.

Ashley Brand

Yeah, yeah, check ins, especially if you're a leader, right of taking the time, and not multitasking. You know, a lot of leaders are busy and all of that, just sitting face to face with your people, one-on-ones, asking a few powerful questions. Love that.

Ashley Brand

[Reads from chat] Set a plan and stick to it. Thanks, Beth. Except welcome those late changing requirements. Right? [Laughs] Stick to it within reason. Let's see one Oh, 10,000% communication. We often communicate more than we think, even when we don't communicate, yes, yes, we communicate in all different ways too.

Ashley Brand

Awesome. So this is something that I like to encourage people to print off, right? If you're just getting used to agile and you're trying to gain that agile mindset. The values and the principles are things that you can easily search, you know? You can pull this down, take a screenshot, you can keep it on your desktop. Or if you're a person that still likes to print and put it next to your desk. That's good, too. I usually just try and choose one of these to improve month over month, right? So right now we're talking on our team about sustainable development, how we can deliver at a constant pace, how we can level

load across the team, and that's really driving some great conversations with us and with with our partners. Yeah, feel free to take a screenshot. This is, this is the good stuff.

Ashley Brand

So again, agile manifesto, 2001 values, four of them, and then principles, 12 of them. And this is where everything stems from. From here, you know, we won't do a deep dive today into frameworks like scrum or a kanban, that's the nitty gritty of agile coaching that we bring to customers and to clients. But everything stems from this, and if we don't get this right with an organization, then all of the frameworks and the ways of delivering usually fall flat if we don't have the right mindset, values and principles to start with. So this is, this is why we wanted to start with this today, with this group.

Ashley Brand

Before I move on to the next and final section, does anyone have any questions so far on the values and principles that lead to that agile mindset? All questions or comments are welcome.

Ashley Brand

One thing before we come off the slide, "deliver working products" used to say "software" and I updated it to products. So if you look into this, and you see software just again, replace it with products. This is applicable outside of software as well, and we've, we've started to modify it for all sorts of delivery teams.

Ashley Brand

All right, let's talk about agile leadership. So the title of this was agile for leaders. I'll tell you. My definition of the leader is not just someone who has direct reports. So, it's not just a supervisor, manager, or director. Anyone can be a leader. Individual contributors can be a leader. And as an organization is adopting agile ways of working, it takes all types of leaders to make it work. So we'll set up groups of change champions, who are individual contributors, who you know, lead the change and all of that. Some of these slides will be talking about people, maybe that are in a higher level leadership position. we'll make sure to differentiate about that.

Ashley Brand

If you go to the next slide, Matt. Kind of talk about the role of agile leaders in a few different ways. So let's say you decide you want to take this agile transformation concept into your area, your organization. A lot of people think that they'll bring an agile coach in. They'll get the teams to set up Jira, which is a software a lot of agile teams use, they'll start planning in one to four week sprints. It'll speed up delivery, and customers will be happy. It's definitely, you know, can be oversimplified, but that nothing will change for their role as leaders within the organization. And so that's why I wanted to kind of round out with this. It really does functionally change leadership role within the organization. So if you are at a higher level leadership role with direct reports, and you're kind of leading that delivery, you may need to focus in different areas. So leading the change -- that can be done by anyone at any level, right? Communicate, be transparent, really leading that change as we go through it, maybe leaning on a change manager is a huge area for agile leaders to focus on when we're doing an agile transformation.

Ashley Brand

You might want to focus more on mission and strategy, instead of going down and into the weeds. So this is something that we work with every team on. We have a lot of leaders in every organization that sometimes, because of resource constraints, because of subject matter expertise, those leaders are going into the weeds because they're trying to support the teams, because they might be a long standing aerospace subject matter expert, and they're the only one that knows about this complex engineering. But when we see leaders do that, we realize there's no one at the mission and strategy level. And so a lot of what we do when we build agile delivery teams is really empower and support the teams to do true delivery, and really encourage those leaders to bubble up a few layers, to have an eye on the mission and the strategy that could be strategic road mapping, talking about value to customers, setting the mission and vision. And that sometimes is jarring for people when they're used to being that subject matter expert and maybe doing delivery themselves.

Ashley Brand

We also ask leaders to develop people and be mentors and coaches in leadership positions. We ask them to decentralize decision making, which is also sometimes can be really uncomfortable, especially if you have committee forums, change control boards, the one person that needs to sign off on something, approval chains, things like that.

Ashley Brand

And then my two favorite ones here, we encourage leaders to motivate their workers and allow them to solve problems, and we also have them emphasize learning and development. So, creating again agile delivery teams that are self organizing, that are trained up, that are experts that are empowered, helps, right? Deliver working products to our customers that are valuable, and that allows leaders to bubble up again and focus on mission strategy and developing their people.

Ashley Brand

Any questions so far on this one? Awesome.

Ashley Brand

So the next slide is really going to show what that looks like. So think about leadership mindsets. Some of these, I've had to change my own behaviors and mindset on as a leader within my organization. So some of my leadership roles, I was the person that knew the answer. I'll look at line four there. I knew the answer. People would come to me and say, here's the answer, go do it in an agile way of working, again, trying to self organize and empower teams. I asked teams for the answer, right? So if they're like, We don't know what to do here, I'll say, okay, what do we know about our customer? What do you think would be appropriate to deliver based on what we know about our customer and what they value, right? And then the teams become more empowered and innovative. Instead of setting the team's deadlines, I set objectives for them to meet. They set the deadlines based on their capacity and their ability to deliver, and we have conversations around that. Instead of directing, I let the team self organize to a point and I become an escalation point for them.

Ashley Brand

So those are just some examples right there. Again, does anyone want to be brave and say that there

might be something on this list that they would have to kind of modify? So is anyone in a role as a leader where they're really heavily coordinating or directing, and, you know, in an agile organization, would have to figure out ways to move to the right here?

Ashley Brand

Great. Something to think, about because it's very hard not to set, yeah [Laughs]. It's very hard not to set deadlines. If you have a personal style as a leader, like I do, where you're like a driver and you like to, you know, get teams moving and plow towards, you know, delivery and all of that. It can be hard. It's also very difficult, I think, not to provide subject matter expertise and like be the person that knows the answer. It's really uncomfortable to change these things sometimes, but we see really great things happen from them. Again, those empowered teams and leaders get to breathe a little bit, because they're not a bottleneck, and they're not the person that everyone has to come to all the time, and it's not all on them, right? It's on the full team to be successful, and what success means is delivering that value, right? So it's good for leaders, it's good for teams, but it can be uncomfortable change. So when we do agile transformation, a lot of times we have a change manager with us that's working with leaders to kind of adopt this new mindset and coach them towards a new way of working.

Ashley Brand

But I will say it's on the bottom here, if leaders don't change, the agile transformation won't work either, right? Leaders are super powerful in an organization, even if you don't have direct reports, if you're in that kind of leadership position on your team as an individual contributor, if you're not bought in and you're not trying to flex your mindset, people will notice and and the transformation will ultimately not work. And we want it to work when we work with clients, so we always focus on agile leadership.

Ashley Brand

All right, we're rounding out the slides here. There's one more. This is something I also like people to take a screenshot of this one and the next one. This is just a behavior summary. So sometimes, when we're talking in theory and behavior modifications and all of that stuff, people are like, please make it real for me, and with a short amount of time, I thought maybe this slide would be helpful. So this is kind of a behavior summary of what would be, maybe a disempowering behavior for teams versus an empowering behavior for teams. If this is a takeaway that you want to bring back to your organization so and again, you don't have to be a people manager. You might be kind of that leader on your delivery team that maybe wants to empower the rest of the group.

Ashley Brand

So direct problem solving, this comes a lot from people just wanting to help. It's from a good place. I'll solve your problems for you. But again, teach a teach a man / woman / human to fish, right? Then they get to solve their own problems.

Ashley Brand

Talk a lot. Oh my gosh, that's me. I love to talk because I love to teach, but listening attentively and asking powerful questions can be much more empowering for groups.

Ashley Brand

Rescuing or heroics, right? Again, trying to help people. Sometimes you have to let people fail a little bit, right within reason. Fail fast, learn fast. And you know, let go of the bike is another metaphor, if you're a parent, and see you know if they're going to be able to do it on their own.

Ashley Brand

Micromanaging, everyone says no one likes micro manager. Extend that trust. Don't expect perfect, right? Create a culture that's open to experimentation. Don't dictate how to do something. Maybe set boundaries and guardrails and let them play within there, figure out how to do something, because if you dictate, you might be squashing some really good ideas.

Ashley Brand

And measure short term gains. We are not great at pausing to celebrate. We're plowing forward and moving really, really quickly in our environment. So really measure those short term gains and celebrate successes and then also embrace that continuous improvement. So feel free to take a screenshot of this one, and just to round out this final slide is also something I think that is a good takeaway for you all, for someone who may want to lead in an agile way, an agile mindset.

Ashley Brand

Some of these might already be familiar to you, but these are just true attributes that we see for good agile leaders and in general, good humans within organizations that can support agile values and agile principles. And it's a lot about just caring for the people that you work with, so, caring about customer impacts, inspiring people, building that psychological safety, valuing progress over perfection, energizing the team can be really hard if you're experiencing some non sustainable pace and burnout yourself. And so you know, there's always tools and techniques that we can bring, you, know, in any sort of engagement with you all on that so much to cover in a short amount of time, but I just wanted to leave you with this, if you want to take some of this back to your organization.

Ashley Brand

And I think with that, we are at time for my presentation, but I have time for questions. Is that right? Sharon, a few minutes for Q and A.

Sharon Trilk

We definitely do. If anyone wants to throw it in the chat or Q A or raise their hand and I will get you unmuted so you can ask.

Ashley Brand

All right, Lay it on me. No. Question is silly, and even if it's a hard question, I'll I'll see if I can answer it.

Ashley Brand

Right? Is it Ellie or Eli Garza?

Ashley Brand

Eli, okay, thank you. [Reads from chat] How do you encourage teams to self organize when they're

tentative to do so? Yes. That's a great question. There's a lot of reasons that I see teams be tentative to self organize. So one of the reasons could be that they're just not trained up enough. So I did see this. You know, working in aerospace, there were a lot of junior engineers, and they were totally paralyzed because they're like, I'm just learning, and this is really complex stuff, and I don't know how to self organize. You know, I'm just out of school. Help me with that, right? We'd have a solution of more professional development and training and mentorship and partnering with maybe a more senior engineer. Some teams are reluctant to self organize because they're afraid to make a mistake, because the culture is such that maybe has been punishing for failure before, or they feel like they can't take, you know, risks or raise any problems so that could be working from on the team culture or the organizational culture in a variety of ways. Sometimes the teams don't know how to self organize because they're not talking to each other, and so they don't know my skill set versus Matt's versus, you know, a couple other people on their team. So even just building in forums where the teams can organize and plan together is something that we do in agile. So setting up a, what we call sprint planning, where the teams have a variety of backlog items, but they collaborate on who is taking what based on their expertise, what lights them up every day, their capacity, and that just having a two hour forum like that can help that too. So it really depends on why teams are not self organizing, to answer your question. I would try to get the root of that problem before you solution for it. Those are just kind of some of the things I've seen.

Sharon Trilk
Eli

Sharon Trilk
Hey, Ashley?

Ashley Brand
Yeah

Sharon Trilk
To go along with that, when, when you're starting this work, do you do, like, personality measures of everyone in the team to try and figure out everyone's best style of, say, communicating with one another, or how they prefer to work, to help with that?

Ashley Brand
Yeah, exactly. It depends on the team, but we do. We do Agile maturity assessments which cover some of those things -- how they're coordinating those teams. We can do things like a DiSC I don't know if you heard of the DiSC framework, but that's communication styles. Those are some things that we have tools in our tool belt for. And then we also do a "ways of working" kickoff with agile teams where we talk about preferences, behaviors, subject matter expertise, and that's usually done in kind of a whiteboarding software, and that is really the best way, I think, to kick off agile teams. And people will say, I can be utilized as an expert for XYZ, and that helps drive the conversation too. So some surveys and a lot of facilitation, and we also have some of those assessments, like DiSC that we can use.

Ashley Brand

Good question, [Reads from the chat]. "What's the most challenging part of establishing an agile culture where it doesn't exist?" Yes, oh my gosh, I could talk about this forever, Matt, but I'll say a couple of the things. The reason why I chose agile for leaders is sometimes leadership behavior modification can be one of the most challenging parts within establishing an agile culture. Well. Lot of times the teams will buy in the delivery teams, and maybe, like, middle level managers are kind of left out of it. And so managers and above, you know, really getting them to be a part of the process, getting them to change mindset and to shape the future of the agile transformation, is a big focus of mine. The other challenge that we have a lot of times, is around budget, to be honest, and portfolio management and how we're going to create agile delivery teams within an overall system that's complex. When it comes to portfolio management, budget, how we spend funds, how we fund projects and not teams, that can be another challenge, too. So we usually try and do some discovery there. Does that help? Matt?

Ashley Brand

Okay, you can give me a thumbs up or a thumbs down. Okay, awesome.

Ashley Brand

Let's see. Thoughts on how to implement experimentation on slim government budgets. Yes, this is why I got into this in the first place at city and county. I actually really love lean and agile, because it works really well in like, slim budget and resource kind of starved environments, because it eliminates a lot of waste and bottlenecks. And so even, you know, with slim government budgets, if you were to, you know, want to do an agile transformation, and, you know, bring on, you know, consultants and things like that, people like Matt and others can, you know, work on, you know, how we can bring someone to support you. And then for the agile transformation itself, it actually is, we can measure, you know, the cost savings and the value delivery to customers and really help you understand kind of that return on investment for agile transformation, but it's baked in to work in an environment that doesn't have a lot of budget and a lot of these mindset and behavior shifts can can happen no matter what the budget situation is. The one cost thing sometimes can be like a project management tool. People want a they've never used one before. They're using a really outdated one, so we work with them on tooling and things like that.

Ashley Brand

Okay, just a couple more questions. [Reads from chat] "We've traditionally used waterfall for projects. How is agile used for planning large projects that could span a year or longer?" Yes, there is hybrid, we call it like scrum-fall that we use for this. I've done that in a lot of clients, and really it's about setting the right level of detail across that project. So if you have, let's say, a two year project, you're going to gather some initial requirements, and you're going to set timelines to the best of your ability, at a strategic roadmap in session or a high level planning session. But for there, you need to work with the agile teams to break down that work. So they're going to break it down maybe on a quarterly basis, then on a monthly basis, but maybe even on a daily basis. And that's where that sprint planning comes in, because once the teams start breaking down the work and estimating it, you'll see whether or not that schedule is really going to be able to be met. And there's ways to create flexibility at those details lower levels of planning while still trying to meet those long term project deadlines. And so that's a big, a big thing that we do is blend waterfall and agile methodologies for organizations so that they can still

manage those long project timelines. If you want to look up a framework for that too, it's called SAFe or scaled agile. That's the that's the agile framework. It's actually based out of Colorado that SAFe folks are a big partner of ours, and that is a scaled agile framework that works with organizations that are traditionally waterfall, and many coaches like myself are trained and certified in that.

Ashley Brand
I think I got all the questions with just a minute left somehow. Anything else for me before Sharon wraps it up? Okay, well, I just want to thank you for allowing me to speak to you all today and let us know if you have any questions, my contact information is there as well as Matt's, and I'll kick it back to Sharon, I think, to close this out.

Sharon Trilk
Yes, thank you, Ashley, this was wonderful. If you do have any questions, contact any of us, please. We'd love to schedule a discovery call. No obligation, just learn more, see about getting a quote if you do want to move forward, because that's what we're here for.

Sharon Trilk
Please save the date for our next Webinar Wednesday. It's going to be on March 12, with Qualtrics, and we have more that are going to be scheduled further out from there. So keep checking back on our newly redesigned website at sipa.colorado.gov or subscribe to our monthly newsletter so you get all those tips and tricks and information and events and news and of course, grants that are opening up because we should have our micro grant this spring, and any other services that we can help you procure.

Sharon Trilk
So. If you want to return to this webinar, we will be getting it up on YouTube once we get it processed. So give us a few days for that, and then we'll have that up on our website and our YouTube channel. And please do help us keep making these webinars relevant and informational for you. Fill out that three question survey that you're going to see at the end and get emailed and get us your feedback, because we'd love to hear it. Thank you all for being with us this morning and make it a wonderful day.

Beth Justice
Thank you.